

May 21, 2010

1400 CST

Water Quality Protection Division

Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico Region 6 Update

Subject: **Water Quality Division Update # 16**
 Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico

Date: May 21, 2010

Reporting Period: May 21, 2010 1300 – May 22, 2010 1300

Situation Status:

CWPPRA Situational Report 5/21/10 1300 CDT

- NOAA forecasts created on 5/20/10 at 1300 CDT for 5/21/10 at 0600 CDT forecasts the oil slick to stretch southeast of the Mississippi Delta westward towards Barataria and Terrebonne Bay. Satellite imagery analysis performed by NOAA indicates that the slick extends as far west as Terrebonne Bay and to the east towards Pensacola. Also some of the slick extends to the southeast towards the Loop Current. Winds are forecast to from the southeast through Friday with wind speeds of 10-12 knots. Ocean models indicate that there is a weak eastward current keeping the oil from moving further to the west but stronger westward currents plus persistent southeast winds may push the oil slick towards Atchafalaya Bay and Marsh Island.

Figure 1 NOAA Oil Slick Estimate provided in NOAA situational report for Deepwater Horizon incident

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Figure 2 NOAA forecast of oil slick near Loop Current.

Monitoring and Assessment

- Oil is now being reported at beaches in Grand Isle, Louisiana resulting in the closure of Grand Isle Beach.
- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff provided comments and input to the REOC Environmental Unit on the draft unified sampling plan for monitoring efforts in response to the BP oil spill. It is anticipated that an interim-final version of the plan will be posted to EPA's oil spill response website shortly (perhaps late today). Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff also provided input to the REOC Environmental Unit on laboratory capacity available to perform toxicity testing as described in the draft unified sampling plan.
- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff participated on several calls yesterday to discuss concerns raised by State Health Commissioners from the Gulf Coast States potentially affected by the oil spill including concerns about how EPA plans to characterize its results from the water sampling data relative to human health impacts and potential alternative approaches, as well as concerns about coordination relative to the beach closure messages communicated to the public amongst the state/federal agencies involved in the BP oil spill response effort.
- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff are continuing to coordinate with REOC and HQ staff on the development of a process to ensure that R6 and R4 are informed of any water quality data indicating elevated levels of risk to aquatic life prior to that data and information being posted on EPA's oil spill response website. This early coordination is needed to ensure that R6 and R4 can be aware of the data/reasons supporting the characterization of risks to aquatic life, and so that R6 and R4 have the appropriate information available when responding to any questions from the public following the posting of the information.
- Continued regular meetings and calls with Region 4, HQ, & REOC
- The water results that were collected by Region 6 on May 14 and May 16, 2010 along the coast of Louisiana did not reveal elevated levels of chemicals usually found in oil.

Location	Level of Concern
T003-0016-100514	Low
T003-0017-100514	Low
T003-0018-100516	Low
T003-0019-100516	Low
T003-1307-100516	Low
T003-1310-100514	Low
T003-1317-100514	Low
T003-1320-100514	Low
T003-2317-100514	Low

Drinking Water

- Drinking water intakes, public drinking water wells, and domestic wells have not been impacted by the oil sheen and are not projected to be impacted.
- EPA Region 6 is providing the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) daily situation report as well as data summaries as they become available.
- EPA Region 6 continues to coordinate closely with the LDHH on all drinking water issues.

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA)

- Oil has been reported in the Pass a Loutre area likely impacting MR-09, Mississippi Delta Wide Crevasses (NMFS sponsored).
- There has been oil reported on Elmer's Island in the Barataria basin. There are many CWPPRA projects that may be impacted along the Gulf of Mexico in the Barataria and Terrebonne basins but a determination cannot be made due to limited confirmed reports of beached oil. Currently working with other federal partners that are conducting overflights to determine extent of beached oil.

Coastal Habitat Impacts

Louisiana Large-Scale Coastal Barrier Plan:

- Ongoing coordination and analyses with OW and Region 6 staff and managers regarding the State's coastal protection application for emergency permit authorizations from the Corps to construct sand barriers in the Chandeleur and Grand Terre Island areas to reduce inland movement of the oil. OW is taking the lead and Regional staff members are providing analytical support. Talking points for the Public Information Office and Administrator are being drafted by OW, utilizing the comments previously submitted by the Region.

Corps Emergency Authorizations for Coastal Protection Features:

- The following requests have been submitted to the Corps, informally reviewed by EPA and other resource agencies: the State of Louisiana submitted a proposal for emergency authorization to install booms and pilings in the Biloxi Marsh area in St. Bernard Parish; sand berm construction along the Isle Dernieres island chain, utilizing Ship Shoal and South Pelto sand sources; sand bag placement in Scofield Bay; and installation of Hesco baskets along sections of beach between Fourchon and Grand Isle. Regional staff is supporting responses by OW.

Corps Navigation Maintenance Dredging:

- A decision is pending by BP contractor, Entrix, on a Corps request (backed by rationale provided by Regional staff) for including the EPA-designated SW Pass Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) in a larger request to drag sorbent material in navigation channels to see if oil is present in the lower portions of the water column or on the sediment surface. A similar operation is being carried out along two transects in the Mississippi River delta and two transects off shore from Port Fourchon.

OW Ecological Impact Analyses:

- Staff is revising an internal draft discussion paper on supporting proposals related to the potentially synergistic habitat effects of Gulf hypoxia and the oil spill, as well making the case for continued hypoxia research in the upper Mississippi River basin (studies that would not divert resources dedicated to the spill).
- Staff coordinated with the Landscape Ecology Branch of the EPA Las Vegas Environmental Services Division regarding work they may be conducting that would contribute to background remote sensing or satellite landscape-scale imagery of the coastal habitats inland of the oil spill.
- Staff confirmed the presence of oil in the following coastal areas: Port Fourchon (Port Director, direct communication); and the mouths of South Pass and Pass a Loutre and in some associated marshes (reports from NOAA & USGS overflights).
- The Dredge operator working for the Corps reported on 5/18 no visual signs of surface oil at the EPA ODMDS and the Corps instructed the dredge to cease operations and notify UC immediately if oil is observed in the waters of the ODMDS.
- Continuing efforts to build upon the combined OW, Region 6, and Region 4 ecological impacts document for use by OW managers, as well on worst case scenarios and ecological Q's and A's.

Data Management – Mapping Efforts

- Using information, data sets, GIS, and maps to determine water and sediment sample base line accuracy.

NPDES

- Continued coordination with 6WQ, 6EN, 6RC, and HQ staff on NPDES permitting and enforcement issues.

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- NPDES Permits and TMDL Branch continue to be available to provide technical assistance as needed.